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LETTER DATED 23 APRIL 1991 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Further to my letter of 13 February 1991 (S/22218), I have the honour to communicate to you pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 678 (1990) a further report on operations in the Gulf.

British Armed Forces played a full part in the 100-hour ground campaign between 24 February and midnight (EST) on 27 February, which led to the liberation of Kuwait. The particular contribution of the British First Armoured Division to the coalition's ground campaign was to engage Iraqi forces to the west of Kuwait. At the end of their advance First Armoured Division troops had reached positions north and north-west of Kuwait City.

The Royal Air Force also continued to contribute to the coalition air campaign. Between 17 January and 27 February the Royal Air Force (RAF) flew over 6,500 sorties, including over 4,000 combat sorties.

The Royal Navy contributed to the maritime campaign and played a leading role in the coalition's mine counter-measures force. Since the end of the hostilities, Royal Navy mine counter-measure vessels have cleared channels into the ports of Ash Shu'aybah and Kuwait City.

The number of prisoners of war taken by British Forces during the ground campaign was some 8,000. All were treated in accordance with the United Kingdom's obligations under the Geneva conventions. Many of those captured had been poorly provided for by the Iraqi authorities, lacking adequate food and clothing. Arrangements were made to supply them with clothing and rations from British stocks before they were evacuated by helicopter from the combat zone for registration under International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) procedures. The most extensive medical facilities ever set up by the British Army in the field were used to ensure that the prisoners were properly looked after. They were subsequently passed to the Saudi Arabian authorities.

Just under 45,000 British service personnel were deployed to the Gulf in support of the operations. British casualties during the campaign were 25 killed in action and 43 wounded.

The United Kingdom has made a major contribution to the international response to the environmental threat posed by the oil released into the Gulf by Iraq, and by the oil well fires started by Iraq in the closing stages of the conflict. After the oil spills, the United Kingdom responded swiftly to requests for assistance from Gulf States. In particular, the United Kingdom helped with a military air lift of 90 tonnes of anti-pollution equipment, and donated six oil skimmers to Bahrain. It also provided expert advice on oil pollution response and the ecological aspects of the slick. It also offered help in training local volunteers in Saudi Arabia to clean oiled birds. The Royal Air Force and the British Army have helped to clean up debris from some of the offshore islands. On 6 March, the United Kingdom announced a contribution of £1 million to the trust fund established by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for clean-up operations in the northern Gulf.

In response to the environmental damage caused by the burning oil wells, the United Kingdom has provided the affected States with an initial assessment of the nature and extent of the smoke plumes, their likely evolution, and their possible impact on the environment and human health. Preliminary analysis of data produced by a British research flight in March was incorporated into this report and further information will be provided to the affected States when it becomes available.

I should be grateful if this letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) D. H. A. HANNAY